Issues and Debates in Postcolonialism: A Critical Exploration of the Concepts of □Orientalism□ and □Subaltern□.

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Introduction:

In 1980's an overtly political approach to interpretation gathered intensity, concerned with the economic, cultural and psychological effects of imperialism and colonialism. Postcolonialism is a term largely used to refer to all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the time of Colonization to our own time. Postcolonialism refers to the ongoing issues between the once colonized countries and the colonizer or the West, since long back when the colonial process started. This struggle of postcolonialism extends over the issues of orientalism, subaltern, gender, race, identity, class, multiculturalism, diaspora, etc. It attempts to examine and analyze the aftermath of colonization; that of restoring the identity of the Independent oriental nations by removing misconceptions about the Orientals. It includes literature of the nations such as □ Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Pakistan, Jamaica and more countries which were once colonized by British. These countries are also called Third World Countries.

The scope of this work will be limited to Edward Said□s concept of □Orientalism□ and Gayatri Spivak□s □subaltern□. The present research work will study the impact of Michel Foucault (discourse, power and knowledge) and Antonio Gramsci (hegemony) on the writings of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak . It examines how the western texts have ideologically represented the East, the Orient or the Subaltern subjects. The critical intervention in this work encompass Gayatri Spivak and her concern for □subaltern□ people who were and are often marginalized by the dominant western culture.

The □Subaltern□ is a military term which means □of lower rank□. She borrowed this term from Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. The subaltern has become the major issue of discussion in postcolonial studies. It tries to explore the unjust representation of the third world women and men, working class or black people in literature. For Spivak subaltern refers to third world women and men, working class people or those disenfranchised and marginalized by the western culture. Marxism and poststructuralism have been a major influence on Gayatri Spivak. In her essay □Can the Subaltern Speak?□ she examines the voice of the subaltern groups (women, tribal, orient). Drawing on Foucault□s notion of □discourse□, on Gramsci□s □hegemony□ and Derrida□s □deconstruction□ the focus is on the role of texts, literary and

otherwise in the colonial enterprise. This work attempts to illustrate the representation of the subaltern/oriental characters in the texts written by the western writers. The fundamental postcolonial thought has been influenced by the Marxist critique of colonialism and imperialism. Marxism has been a major influence on the thinkers from Frantz Fanon to Gayatri Spivak.

Postcolonial theory or post-colonialism can be said to have been inaugurated with the publication of Edward Said□s *Orientalism* in 1978. A Palestinian-American critic Edward Said drawing on Foucault and to lesser extent on Gramsci in his study of orientalism examines, how the western writers have represented the east in their works. Said□s book is considered to be one of the influential books of the late 20th c. He points out the extent to which □knowledge about the □orient□ as it was produced and circulated in Europe was an ideological accompaniment of colonial power. This seminal work heralded a revolution in the field of literary studies. It shows how no form of intellectual or cultural activity is innocent of power hierarchies, highlighting the collusion between literary representation and colonial power. Orientalism explores how every branch of knowledge, scientific as well as that broadly denoted □the humanities□, is not merely tinged with, but part and parcel of, the establishment of European political hegemony through the process of colonial conquest and domination. However, it is the stress on the literary text that has marked out and at the same time circumscribed the field of post-colonial studies.

There is a disputed matter of □where east meets west□ and vice versa. No one has yet proposed a junction point in general satisfaction. A number have been suggested: Aden, Suez, Alexandria, Istanbul and even Prijedor(in north-west Bosnia). Sarajevo is considered to be the likeliest, an important, cultural, commercial, and political centre during the period of the □Ottoman Islamic Empire□ and where even today there are number of public oriental buildings. It was Sarajevo that great camel train carrying merchandise from Turkestan and Baluchistan, from Persia, Syria and Arabia, finally came to halt. Orientalism a discourse is believed to have been begun its formal existence with the decision of the church council of Vienne in 1312 to found a series of chairs in Arabia, Greek, Hebrew and other places. In the Middle Ages the east became of increasing interest to the west-it was remote, inaccessible and exotic. Most of the curiosity and speculation of such study were stimulated by travelers□□ tales and stories. For example, Marco Polo (c.1254-1324) is the prime example of an author who began to introduce the east to the west with his immensely popular book of travels, which was translated into many European

languages. Vasco-da-gama discovered India, provided material for the west to write about the east and fantasize about it. A version of □Arabian Nights Entertainment□ or □The One Thousand and One Nights□ by Antoine Galland appeared in 1704 and 1717. By 18th c., Sir William Jones considered as one of the earliest British orientalist who translated many works from Arabic and Persian which influenced the oriental themes of romantic poets. The king and Queens of the west funded the travelers to study about the native people of alien lands they discover. For example, Napoleon had interest in preserving the knowledge about the east. He also preserved material collected from alien lands in museums. He funded for such study of the oriental people.19th c. was an outstanding period for oriental studies. The east could be regarded as a □career□. Countless colonial writers contributed memoirs, government reports, commentaries to the heap of oriental studies. The scholars, who never went anywhere near any part of east began to write about the east or the orient. All these fabricated a □romantic□ view of that belongs to the field of orientalism, which has little to do with reality of the life in the orient. It was the product of myth, legend, assumption and theory. It was the attraction of the east that inspired Europeans to create and recreate the east as they wanted it to be: mysterious, wonderful, bizarre and perhaps immoral. In this way the bibliography of European orientalism and oriental studies multiplies yearly. In the last decades since the publication of Said□s Orientalism, post-colonialism has developed into a sprawling academic discipline. Its purview has expanded and in its examination of the power/knowledge nexus, postcolonialism has ranged over a wide variety of subjects, including the history of colonial conquests, of anti-colonial struggles, the exigencies of post-colonial nation formations and the politics of cultural domination. Orientalism had concentrated on literary representations and on the ways that the exigencies of the colonial rule had led to an exoticised representation of other cultures (of the Middle East, in Said□s examples). A limitation of that work is that it pictures the colonized as mute and passive, and the colonizer as balance. Orientalism does not satisfactorily account for the rise of colonial resistance. Orientalism had highlighted the erotic dimensions of colonial conquest, were depicted as passive women waiting to be ravished.

Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak challenged the authority of the western knowledge and power over the Orient and the subaltern by endorsing the philosophies of Michael Foucault and Antonin Gramsci. Foucault offered an idea for interpreting the relationships between knowledge and power. Gramsci offered a means of explaining how certain ideas about the orient prevailed

over others. Before moving further I have a brief description about Foucault and Gramsci's concepts such as, discourse, □power□, and □knowledge□ and Gramsci's hegemony□. Hence I think it necessary to have a brief idea about Foucault and Gramsci.

Origin of the Research Problem:

□Knowledge is not innocent it is always operated by power□ this Foucauldian notion informs Edward Said□s book 'Orientalism' and Spivak□s This research work tries to trace the concept of Orientalism. This study comes under postcolonialism, a most debated '□ism'□ .The term post colonialism addresses itself to historical, political ,cultural and textual ramifications of colonial encounter between the west and the East. I will be focusing towards origin and development of Orientalism, Spivak□s concept of □Subaltern, impact of Foucault and Gramsci on Edward Said and Spivak.

Drawing my interest in Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Foucault, and Gramsci in this research work I would like to examine how the western texts have represented the East or the orient or the subaltern. An attempt had been made to show how some canonical texts can be read against the grain. The choice of texts and movies for giving examples in this research work are informed by my studying of them in postgraduate courses and which inevitably reflect my own area of interest. Thus the selected texts or movies should not be treated as paradigmatic of postcolonialism or orientalism or subaltern studies.

Literature Survey:

In Edward Said□s book □Orientalism□ he points out how a western writer Richard Burten, without even travelling to Mecca or Medina could write about Islam. Western texts depicted the muslims and other religions and their people as being despots, sensual, fatalistic and barbaric. Ania Loomba in her book Colonialism/Postcolonialism excellently explains various issues in postcolonialism. A version of □Arabian Nights Entertainment□ or □The One Thousand and One Nights□ by Antoine Galland appeared in 1704 and 1717. By 18th century Sir William Jones considered as one of the earliest British orientalist who translated many works from Arabic and Persian which influenced the oriental themes of romantic poets. Leela Gandhi□s book □Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction□ analyses literature in the light of postcolonial theories. Frantz Fanon, a French psychiatrist expresses his experience of racism or racial

discrimination in his works □Black Skin, White Masks□ and □The Wretched of the earth. His works deal with psychological effects of colonialism. Frantz Fanon recounts how French white strangers abused his in derogatory words. They called him □dirty nigger□ or □look, a Negro□. Fanon felt insulted, violated and imprisoned by the way in which the French men behaved with him. Such events deny the right to define their own identity as a subject. The colonized subject is forced to believe self as an □other□. The Negro is everything that the French colonizers are not. Colonizers are civilized and intelligent. On the contrary, the Negro is uncivilized and irrational. In his book □Black Skin, White Masks□ Fanon states , □A Man was expected to have like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man□. Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and subaltern studies scholars are most controversial postcolonial thinkers or critics. Homi K. Bhabha puts forth the terms mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence in his work □Of Mimicry and Man□. He assumes that all the master texts of west are fissured and hybrid. He investigates the process of production of colonial subjects by western texts, which are ambivalent. These texts create the colonized subjects as in Homi K. Bhabha□s words □almost the same but not quite□ and later □almost the same but not white□. Mimicry is the space between cultures. The mimic man occupies this impossible space between cultures. It can be noticed in the works of Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster, George Orwell and V. S. Naipaul. Bhabha is interested in these figures of □in-between□ of colonial discourse. This hybridization destabilizes univocal forms of authority. Gayatri Spivak poses the problem of reclaiming the precolonial past, which is not possible. One cannot recover the voices of those who had been made subjects of colonial representation. She is particularly concerned for women, dalit women or third world women.

This phase of postcolonial literatures is marked by the act of decolonizing the mind. The landmark work in this area is □The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures□ by three authors Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. The most important point in this book is the concern to decolonize the English language. This book is epitomized by the view that the literature from the once colonized countries challenged the language of colonial power. Language as a medium of power was being replacing it with the discourse fully adapted to the colonized places. Writers were creating new □englishes□ by-inserting unstable words in their works, rejecting to use standard English syntax and incorporating many different verities of English into their texts. It was an attempt to challenge and subvert standard English into various new forms of □english□.

Interdisciplinary Relevance:

Orientalism is defined as a term pertaining to □the orient□ as discovered, observed and described, in a sense, □invented□ by Europe and the West. As far as, literature is concerned it refers to the discourse by the West about the East, in all fields, such as, Literary, Sociological, cultural, Anthropological and so on, which have no counter point in the east.

Orientalism can be found in various other fields like Architecture, Painting, Music and Film. In many of these works, they portrayed the Orient as exotic, colorful and sensual.In many films & novels it can traced out how the Arabs, Indians, Chinese and other Non-European characters, races and religions or cultures have been represented as the □other□.

In geographical terms, it covers the whole world, examining the cultural ramifications of political and economic domination. Historically, it had begun by looking at post-colonial periods, after the process of colonization had started, that is from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and thus was part of the deconstructive questioning of European Enlightenment.

Significance of the study:

This Project is an attempt to spell out the concepts by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Gramsci and Michael Foucault in relation to orientalism, subaltern studies and postcolonialism. The present research work will be an attempt to analyze and interpret the canonical texts against the grain. This project explores the ways in which western authors have ideologically maintained the superiority of the □west□ or the □occident□ over the □east□ or the □orient□. Films and Cinema also represent □the orient□/subaltern in exploitative ways. The research work will study the impact of Michel Foucault (discourse, power and knowledge) and Antonio Gramsci (hegemony) on the writings of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak.

The proposed research work will be helpful to students, academicians and society in many ways. It will help students to interpret texts as well as movies and to understand the ideology behind it. They will also come across the □unsaid□ in the text and □intertexts□. They will get new ideas of studying movies and texts and their ideological composition.

Hypothesis:

Michel Foucault□s concept of □discourse□ and Antonio Gramsci□s concept of □hegemony□ influenced both Edward Wadie Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Orientalism can be seen as a discourse which has been developed with the western superiority against the orient/the east or the third world countries. It could be noticed that the subaltern, as Gayatri Spivak says, can not speak. The third world women, working class or the poor peasants are the subalterns.

Any discourse (like orientalism or subaltern studies) is operated by some power. The truth or knowledge in such discourse is always accompanied by power politics. The unjust justification of the false representation is made. The western canonical texts falsely represent the working class, the subalterns, the □other□ or the orient. This ideological representation and the secondary positioning of the non-western subjects still persists in different fields of knowledge like literature, cinema and philosophy.

Objectives:

- This research work briefly explores the concept of orientalism, subaltern and postcolonialism.
- It is concerned for □subaltern□ people who were and are often marginalized by the by dominant western culture
- It examines how Orientalism can be described and analyzed as a corporate institution for dealing with the orient□?
- It explores Spivak□s concept of subaltern with illustrations.
- The research work views, how Orientalism is a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the orient?
- An attempt will be made to analyze some texts and movies in the light of Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said's theories in postcolonialism.
- A part of this research work discusses about the impact of Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci and Marxism. How the influence reflects in the selected critics and their works.
- This study challenges the agenda of study of non-western countries their culture and literature.
- Attempt to read the 'unread' in the canonical texts and the 'unseen' in the movies. Films and Cinema also represent the orient/subaltern in exploitative ways.

Methodology:

The research Methodology adopted in this project will be descriptive, interpretative, analytical and critical with the help of various print and electronic primary and secondary sources of selected texts and films. The data will be critically analyzed and evaluated in order to present various perspectives regarding □Orientalism□ or □representation of the east by the west□.

Plan of the Research Project:

Chapter I	Introduction
Chapter II	Edward Said: Origin and Development of □Orientalism□.
Chapter III	Understanding Gayatri Spivak□s concept of subaltern
Chapter IV	Impact of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci
Chapter V	Conclusion

The first chapter would give the brief introduction of postcolonialism, orientalism and the subaltern. It would also give definitions of the some important terms used in the research work. It would discuss the methodology, plan and significance of the research. The second chapter will trace the origin and development of the term □Orientalism'□. It goes back to the 12th and 13th centuries when Orientalism as a □discourse□ is believed to have been begun. The third chapter explores Gayatri Spivak□s concept of the □subaltern'. The fourth Chapter will focus on the influence of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci on the writings of Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The fifth chapter will be the concluding one, dealing with the arguments and discussions made in the earlier chapters.

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